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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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Washington, D.C. 20520

August 13, 1976

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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. BRENT SCOWCROFT
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Follow-up on Ad Hoc Interdepartmental
Group's Study in Response NSSM 239:
The Future of the French Territory
of the Afars and the Issas (FTAI)

In view of the recent changes in the situation with regard to the FTAI (e.g. election of new government, advance of referendum to January, 1977) the ad hoc Interdepartmental Group is submitting herewith an updating of the situation. We will shortly be sending our formal agency comments on the study on the future of the FTAI prepared in response to NSSM 239.

Peter Bridges
for C. Arthur Borg
Executive Secretary -

Attachment:

Updating of the Situation.

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AN UPDATING OF THE SITUATION IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

Since the writing of the study on the independence of the FTAI, there have been a number of significant developments.

FTAI: In June the representatives of the three principal political groups within the FTAI met in Paris with French Government officials in order to agree to steps leading to independence. The representatives of the National Independence Union, the African People's Independence League (APIL), and the FTAI parliamentary opposition all pledged support for a government of national unity, and have signed [REDACTED]

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(The French admit some doubt concerning the value of these pledges.) The GOF agreed to modify the nationality code of the Territory which has heretofore restricted the franchise so as to assure an Afar majority. Earlier, as evidence of its willingness to play an evenhanded role between the Afars and the Issas, French authorities in the FTAI resumed the responsibility for public security which had been delegated to Territorial Prime Minister Ali Aref's government.

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Following the Paris agreements, rioting broke out in Djibouti on July 9 between Afars and Issas and at least 15 people were killed. Ali Aref's supporters may have begun the disturbance in order to postpone his political demise, for by then it was clear that he was unable to attract sufficient support to form a broadly based government. He accused the French of yielding to Somali pressure, and he refused to associate himself with the Paris agreements. Submitting to French pressure, he finally resigned on July 17 and was replaced on July 29 by Abdallah Kamil, Secretary General of the preceding government.

France: A high Quai source has informed us that French determination to attempt to maintain a military presence in Djibouti has significantly declined, although French representatives have said that they are prepared to offer cooperation in military matters to the new state after independence. No African country has been willing to support a French troop presence openly. Nor has the GOF yet been able to obtain the sought for guarantees of the Territory's independence from any organization or state (aside from Ethiopia). In the

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face of these discouraging developments, the GOF is determined to maintain the schedule for Djibouti independence. The referendum is now planned for January 1977, a constituent assembly is to be elected in March, and independence to be granted in May or June. According to one high Quai source, the GOF sees little hope for a truly independent state and expects a Somali move to take over the Territory shortly after independence, a move which the Ethiopians will be in no position to prevent. The State Secretary for Overseas Departments and Territories takes a more optimistic view of the future of Djibouti as an independent state and hoped the US would support French efforts.

Somalia: Somali-supported political activity was instrumental in undercutting Ali Aref. Following the Paris negotiations, Hassan Gouled, leader of the APIL, visited Mogadiscio and there pledged to include the GSDR-controlled Front for the Liberation of the Somali Coast in future talks leading to FTAI independence. However, he apparently did not prove as pliable a tool of Somali ambitions as Siad had hoped. Meanwhile Somalia continues its pressure on Ethiopia by supporting

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incursions of irregular combatants into the Ethiopian border areas. Our Embassy in Mogadiscio sees little chance of an overt Somali military move against an independent FTAI but believes that Somali-sponsored and directed subversion against FTAI will continue. (See top of page 5 of NSSM 239).

Ethiopia: The Government of Ethiopia has reluctantly accepted the withdrawal of Ali Aref from the center of the political scene. During Hassan Gouled's visit to Addis in June, the EPMG agreed that all "habitual residents" of the FTAI should participate in the political process. This was a significant concession to the Somali ethnic elements in the Territory. However, the EPMG remains gravely concerned over lower level pan-Somali influences in the APIL. In one attempt to assure the stability of the Territory the EPMG has requested that the Soviet Union exercise a moderating influence on the GSDR. We have been told that in mid-1975 the EPMG turned to the USSR for military assistance, but was refused. In July of this year an Ethiopian delegation visited Moscow and our Embassy there speculates that this time the Ethiopians may have gained the promise of some military assistance.

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Chairman Teferi Bante, however, has said that the EPMG considers Soviet assurances to be less than satisfactory, and has suggested to us that US-Soviet collaboration could help to preserve the peace. He also told us that the scale and pace of the Somali infiltrations into Ethiopia have increased. U.S. Embassy Addis agrees with Embassy Mogadiscio's thesis that Somali subversive efforts in the FTAI or unplanned border clashes between Ethiopia and Somali forces carry a greater risk in triggering full-scale hostilities over Djibouti than the more unlikely contingency of a Somali attack on the Territory.

The OAU: Much of the Somali-Ethiopian maneuvering has taken place within the context of the OAU. At the most recent meetings in Mauritius, the Ethiopian draft resolution on the FTAI was accepted substantially as written. The final OAU resolution reportedly reaffirmed respect for FTAI territorial integrity, proposed OAU observers at the Djibouti independence referendum, and called for a round table conference of all political groups and recognized liberation movements under OAU auspices to draw up a common political

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platform. (This meeting was scheduled to take place in Accra in August, but has now been indefinitely postponed at the request of the APIL.)

In a press conference in Mauritius, the Somali Head of Delegation again refused to renounce explicitly the historic Somali claims to Djibouti (a move that would be impossible for a Somali Government to make and still retain any popular support), saying that Somali urging of unconditional independence for the Territory superceded any such claims, and he rejected the Ethiopian proposal that the two neighboring states guarantee the independence and territorial integrity of Djibouti, but he did state that Somalia would accept OAU or UN guarantees.

The USSR: Gromyko assured the French Foreign Minister in April that the Soviets favor a settlement in Djibouti on the basis of "the opinion expressed by the local populace" and have so informed the Somali Government. The Ethiopians report that they too have received assurances from the Soviets; the Soviets, on the other hand, told the French that they had urged both sides to adopt reasonable positions. The Soviet-Ethiopian communique of July 14 indicated that Soviet economic experts and teachers might

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be sent to Ethiopia, and there is an oblique hint that some military cooperation may be in the offing.

We have no specific confirmation of the assurances given Ethiopia or the restraining signals that the USSR may have passed on to Somalia and Ethiopia. As our Embassy in Moscow has noted, it is in the Soviet interest to portray itself to Addis as a restraining influence on Siad, while the line of least resistance would in fact be a reproving acquiescence in Somali subversion.

The Arab States: The Saudis and the Egyptians have both expressed concern about the future of Djibouti. The Egyptians have requested permission to open a Consulate General in Djibouti, and Ambassador Porter has suggested to the Saudis that an official presence in the FTAI might be a useful contribution to stability. The French have not yet made a decision concerning the Egyptian request.

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